

## [E.R. Kaiser]

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Francis Donovan

Thomaston, Nov. 18 '38

E.R. Kaiser, former superintendent of the Clock Co. "Tell you a story about Woodruff (W. T. Woodruff, once president of the company) and old Simon Sullivan, but don't use Simon's name, because his sons and daughters are [g?] growing up here and they might not like it.

"Simon used to be kind of handy man and gardener around the movement shop—used to keep the grounds in trim and so forth. [?] Woodruff was [t?] the kind that liked to give orders and of course Simon [was?] was around where the old man could see him most [oft?] of the time and he got plenty of them.

"But he got tired of it and he finally [?] resolved to do something about it. The old man came out one summer day, and he said to Simon:

"I want [yo?] you to mow the lawn this afternoon, Simon, and also trim that hedge. Then you can wash the office windows, and if you get through in time, you can start painting the [tool?] shed."

"Simon looked at him for a minute, then he says: 'Such were my intentions. Mr. Woodruff.' Woodruff walked away without saying anything, but a few days later he came [?] back and went through the same rigamarole—gave Simon a lot of orders that would [?] have taken

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him a week to carry out. Simon has the same dry answer: 'such were my intentions, Mr. [W?] Woodruff'

Woodruff did it a couple of times more before it began to dawn on him that Simon was [?] taking him for a ride, as they say. After that he didn't bother Simon unless it was absolutely necessary." 3 15041

E.R. Kaiser, employed by the company for more than 40 years. Formerly superintendent, now first selectman of the town. German parentage. Residence, Hgah?] High street.

"If you're going to write anything about Aaron Thomas, for God's sake give him credit for being a civic-minded, charitable man. Why that very clock" (pointing to a massive, old fashioned mahogany wall clock with pendulum [movement?] that hangs upon the wall in his office)" that very clock was given to the town by Aaron Thomas when he became first selectman. And that isn't all he did by a long shot.

"During the panic of 1887 he gave all his farm produce—and it was plenty—to the needy. He had acres and acres of land, with half dozen hands working steady under an overseer. He had prize cattle and horses.

"He was always doing things for the town and for the church—he belonged to the Congregational church—but half of them were never heard of and he got no credit—not that he ever cared. He donated land for the two Swedish churches here I believe, though I'm not certain.

"Sure [weathxx?] weather affects clocks—that's pretty generally known. The balance movements will vary more than the pendulums though. We made the finest railroad movement in the country over at the old Marine shop, and it was adjis?] adjusted to heat and cold."

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A picture of Aaron Thomas as a sort of benevolent despot, irascible, high [temperwd?] tempered, with almost feudal power over this employees, and at [?] same time democratic and unaffected to an extraordinary degree, takes [?] form from conversations with those who [know?] knew him. The last of the Thomases to actively conduct the business in his native community, his name is mentioned by these, his old employees, so often not only because he was their contemporary, but because he was indubitably a truly remarkable character. Here's more about [Mr.?] him, gleaned from James Wilson, [S?] Scotch, who worked nearly 45 years for the company. He lives on Judson [street.?)

“The shops shut down tight for three months during the panic of 1887. 4 People were up against it because there wasn't much in the way of organized relief in those days. But them that lived in the company houses didn't have to pay their rent. That was Aaron Thomas's doings. They owned a good number of houses then. They owned the Cotton row, and the Yellow row over on Railroad and Chapel streets, and the row on Clay street and a lot more.

“Walter Thomas was superintendent of the case shop, I think, when I came to work here, and Edson Thomas was superintendent of the tower clock department. Edson also ran the old brick yard up [?] off crow bill asa sideline, but I don't [thiin?] think it was ever very profittable?] profitable.

“In those days they had about 1,000 to 12,00 hands throughout the three plants, and if I remember rightly they had about eight clerks—that was their whole office force. They tell [?] me now they have [?] x sixty-eight office workers. And I misdoubt they can count 300 hands.

“Dud Bradstreet used to be vice president [the?] when I went to work in 1886. He took care of most of the office work, they said, and you wouldn't [seen?] see him walk through the plant more than twice a year. He'd always speak nicely to everybody though. Old Aaron Thomas, I used to see him walking by my house every Sunday with old Mr Miner, who

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used to be handy man over in the Movement shop. They'd go out in the woods for a stroll, every Sunday morning. Would [?] you see any of them doing that today? [?] You would not.

"Woodruff was a different [tyxpe?] type. I mean [??] William T. Woodruff rhe president after Aaron. He came through the stock room where I was working one day, and he was looking for trouble. But I had [everythin?] arranged in good [?] order. He couldn't find [?] anything to complain about, so after he'd looked around for about five minuts, [He?] he said: "Who takes care of this place?" I said: "I do,"

"I thought so, says he, very [??] sarcastic, and walks away."

"But for all he was so high and mighty I remember when his father, old Doc Woodruff, kept cows and pigs and chickens in the barn in back of that fine big house of theirs."